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ABSTRACT

This study examined strategy use in producing lexical collocations among freshman English majors at the Chinese Culture University. Divided into two groups by English writing proficiency, students completed three tasks: a collocation test, an optimal revision task, and a task-based structured questionnaire regarding their actions and mental processes involved in producing lexical collocations. Overall, retrieval, literal translation, de-lexicalized verbs, synonyms, and appeal to authority were the most effective types of strategy use leading to production of acceptable collocations. While good writers made better use of retrieval, de-lexicalized verbs, synonyms, and appeal to authority in producing acceptable collocations, poor writers used literal translation more successfully than good writers. The top four types of ineffective strategy use were literal translation, retrieval, approximate translation, and use of de-lexicalized verbs. Literal translation and approximate translation troubled good writers most, and retrieval and literal translation troubled poor writers most. Although a general pattern of strategy use could be observed in the production of acceptable/unacceptable collocations, there were individual differences in choice of preferred effective strategy use among good and poor writers. Implications for teaching and learning lexical collocations are noted. The collocation test is appended. (Contains 28 references.) (SM)

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A Study of Strategy Use in Producing Lexical Collocations

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The paper was a study of strategy use in producing lexical collocations. Thirty-four freshmen English majors participated in the study. Divided into two groups according to their English writing proficiency, the students were required to complete three tasks: 1) a collocation test, 2) an optional revision task, and 3) a task-based structured questionnaire used to elicit students' reports on their actions and mental processes involved in producing lexical collocations. The results of the study indicated that retrieval, literal translation, de-lexicalised verbs, synonyms, and appeal to authority were the more effective types of strategy use leading to the production of acceptable collocations. While good writers made better use of retrieval, de-lexicalised verbs, synonyms, and appeal to authority in producing acceptable collocations than poor writers, poor writers used literal translation more successfully than good writers. Regarding the ineffective types of strategy use, the top four were literal translation, retrieval, approximate translation, and use of de-lexicalised verbs. Among them, literal translation and approximate translation troubled good writers most and retrieval and literal translation troubled poor writers most. Although a general pattern of strategy use could be observed in the production of acceptable/unacceptable collocations, there were still individual differences in the choice of preferred effective strategy use among good and poor writers. The paper ends with implications for teaching and learning lexical collocations.

INTRODUCTION

From the studies done regarding students' production of English lexical collocations[1] (Liu, 1999a, 199b, 2000), we have had some understanding of EFL students' collocational problems: Firstly, they had an inadequate knowledge of acceptable collocations; secondly, most students relied heavily on the use of direct translation in producing acceptable lexical collocations; thirdly, unacceptable collocations resulted from both interlingual and intralingual transfer; fourthly, after receiving formal collocation teaching and gaining more linguistic knowledge of and exposure to English lexical collocations, students were able to produce A) a greater number of collocation patterns but B) a higher percentage of unacceptable collocations resulting from intralingual transfer than from interlingual transfer.

In respect of the very last finding, our question is: Why can't formal collocation teaching help students produce fewer unacceptable lexical collocations? Is this related to the strategy use in producing lexical collocations? In other words, do good writers and poor writers use different types of strategy in producing collocations? Or do they use the same type of strategy to a different effect? In addition, what types of strategy use are more effective than others? If strategy use really plays an important role in making students be able to produce more acceptable and fewer unacceptable lexical collocations, then EFL teachers ought to spend some time getting a good picture of it. Based on that, we can adjust our teaching methods and materials more effectively and succeed in helping students cultivate their sensitivity to the characteristics of lexical collocations.

Strategy Use and Strategic Competence

In this paper, the term "strategy use" is closest in meaning to "strategic competence". According to Chapelle (1995: 161), this competence is what is required for putting language knowledge to use; the strategies can be classified into four types: 1) assessing a situation, 2) setting communicative goals, 3) composing plans for achieving those goals, and 4) executing those

[1] For a definition of lexical collocation, please see Liu (2000).

plans (Færch and Kasper, 1983; Bachman, 1990).

Canale and Swain (1980: 30) included strategic competence as a major component in their construct of communicative competence and placed an emphasis on the characteristic of the strategies being both verbal and non-verbal. However, their definitions of strategic competence are limited to the notion of "compensatory strategies," which are called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or due to insufficient competence (p. 30). Later, Swain (1984: 189) amended this notion by including "attempts to enhance the effectiveness of communication."

According to Tarone and Yule (1989), strategic competence refers to the ability to successfully get one's meaning across to a listener. The skills involved include the ones of transmitting and receiving information and the ones of dealing with problems that may arise in the transmission of this information. In defining the word "strategies," Brown (1994: 104) placed a particular emphasis on the fact that each individual has his or her own ways to solve a problem and he or she usually chooses one or several strategies at a time.

Seven Types of Strategy Use

In the present study, seven types of strategy use in producing a lexical collocation were investigated. Among them, there were observable actions (like appealing for assistance) and unobservable mental processes (like retrieving a collocation from long-term memory). The research focused on the positive qualities as well as the compensatory nature of strategies.

Retrieval.. Languages do not consist of words but of chunks (Lewis, 1997: 60). Without this understanding, many students do not have strong intention to store collocations in their memory. However, with restricted collocability, collocations are not at all words put together freely. Therefore, students with the wrong belief often fail to find the collocations they need when they communicate in either spoken or written mode. Those with the right concept of language can usually retrieve more successfully and produce acceptable collocations. Of course, some students can remember better than the others. This is another aspect that needs our attention.

Literal translation. When students fail to find any stored collocation that could be put to use, some of them would choose literal translation to transfer the thought word-for-word from L1 to L2. In this paper, literal translation refers to a strategy employed to produce either acceptable or unacceptable collocations. It was different from the "literal translation" Tarone (1984: 131) had used in his studies, which was a strategy for the production of incorrect language item or structure.

Approximate translation: When students decide to rely on their intuition to create collocations of their own, they could choose approximate translation as another strategy use besides literal translation. Approximate translation is used here differently from approximation, a term Tarone (1984: 131) used to mean a strategy use for the production of an incorrect lexical item or structure that shares enough semantic features in common with the desired item. It is a neutral term referring to a strategy use for the production of an either acceptable or unacceptable collocation. It is a process of paraphrasing the thought from L1 to L2.

Use of de-lexicalised verbs. Because of linguistic deficiencies, intermediate EFL students often think de-lexicalised verbs (e.g., *do, take, make,* and *keep*) are empty words like those "all- purpose-words" (Dörnyei, 1995:58) that have little or no meaning outside the context of particular use. As a result, they tend to use de-lexicalised words carelessly and substitute one for the other casually.

Use of synonym. Students in general are inclined to use synonym as a strategy in solving L2 lexical problems. However, without collocational information of the synonyms they were using, students frequently produce unidiomatic collocations like **emend a person* for *reform a person*, **rehearse the piano* for *practice the piano*, and **rectify a person* for *correct a person* (Martin, 1984: 133).

Appeal to authority. Having difficulty finding the right collocation to use, some students would ask a native speaker for it; the other students would look up in a dictionary for the

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answer (Brown, 1994: 121). What kind of dictionary do they usually use? Can they get the answer from that dictionary?

Appeal for assistance. Field-independent learners have a tendency to reject others' guidance and instruction (Chapelle, 1995: 158). Recent studies (Alptekin and Atakan, 1990; 1990; Chapelle and Abraham, 1990; Chapelle and Green, 1992) have provided evidence for a correlation between field independence and second language success.

Research Questions

The paper was an attempt to investigate some writing students' strategy use in the production of lexical collocations. Four questions were asked in the present study:

1. Do good and poor writers differ in their strategy use in producing acceptable lexical collocations?
2. Do good and poor writers differ in their strategy use in producing unacceptable lexical collocations?
3. Is there a relationship between quality of lexical collocations and strategy use in producing them?
4. What are the individual differences among good or poor writers in terms of strategy use in producing lexical collocations?

METHOD

Participants

Thirty-four freshmen English majors participated in the study. The experiment was conducted at the end of the second semester when the students had learned English for almost seven years. Their English writing proficiency levels ranged from lower intermediate to intermediate. The researcher of the study, also their writing instructor, had incorporated systematic collocation teaching into the writing syllabus throughout the year. Therefore, the students were familiar with all the patterns of lexical collocations. Encouraged to pay special attention to collocations in various kinds of readings (like books and newspapers), they were also asked to turn in extra-credit work, which was pages of collocations noticed and collected one by one. In this study, the thirty-four students were divided into two groups according to their average grade for English Writing I in the second semester. The seventeen top ones were classified as good writers; the rest were poor writers.

Tasks and Procedure

A total of three tasks were administered. The first was a collocation test assessing students' ability to produce acceptable lexical collocations. The second was an optional revision task involving some dictionary consultation. The third was a questionnaire investigating the real process of how students produced those acceptable and unacceptable collocations.

A. Collocation Test

The content of the test. The collocation test consisted of thirty-two questions (see Appendix A). Based on the findings of Liu (2000), six common patterns of lexical collocations were included in the test. They were V+ N, Adj.+ N, N+V, Adv.+Adj., V+Adv., and Adv.+V. collocation patterns. Among the collocations to be produced, some were identical to the Chinese transliteration; some had Chinese translation equivalents; a special category contained combinations made up of a noun and a de-lexicalised verb (e.g., *do, make, take, have,* and *put*); a small number of them contained collocational synonyms.

The pilot study of the test. The collocation test given to the participants was actually a revised edition of a pilot test conducted a week in advance to three other freshmen English majors. Based on their opinions, the inappropriate question items were eliminated or revised.

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The procedure. The collocation test was given to the students in class during the last second week of the second semester. The students were asked to fill in the blank of each question with a word that could best go with the preceding or following underlined word. The correct form of the required word was marked on the paper (e.g., all the patterns in the first part were V+N and the word to be produced for the blank should be a verb.). However, no initial letter was provided for the required word. There were two important rules to observe. First of all, they were not allowed to use any dictionary as they were taking the test. Secondly, if more than one word occurred to them, they should fill in the one that fit most. Altogether it took the students two hours to finish the whole test.

B. The Revision Task

After the students completed the collocation test, they were asked to circle with a red pen those items that they had difficulty with. Then they were told to decide on their own if they wanted to go to any classmate for help or consult a dictionary for a "better" answer. If they did, they should write down the "second" answer in the margin but not cross out the original answer. The researcher would be able to make a comparison of the two answers and examine the difference between them.

C. The Questionnaire

The purpose of the method. In this study, a task-based structured questionnaire (Matsumoto, 1994) was adopted as a technique for eliciting participants' retrospective reports on the actions and mental processes involved in producing lexical collocations.

The content of the questionnaire. The students were asked to answer each of the following questions in a written mode:

1. Did you retrieve the English lexical collocation from your memory?
2. Or did you create it using literal or approximate translation? If yes, which type did you use?
3. Was the collocate of the headword in the collocation a synonym of another word that you had known of?
4. How did you decide on producing the one that was filled in the blank instead of the other ones?
5. Did you ask somebody for help or consult a dictionary for the problem collocations after you finish the collocation test in class?

The procedure. After the students finished the optional revision task, they were asked to complete the questionnaire at home. With no time limit set for this task, the students were allowed to take a break whenever they felt tired answering the questions. To make sure the students understood all the questions, the researcher went over each of them with the students giving necessary explanation and translation in Chinese.

D. Rating of the Collocation Test

All the collocations produced by the students were rated for their acceptability. For the accuracy of judgment, several dictionaries of collocations were consulted. They included *The BBI Dictionary of English Word Combinations* (Benson, et al., 1997), *The LTP Dictionary of Selected Collocations* (Hill & Lewis, 1997), and *A Dictionary of English Collocations* (Wang, 1990). Besides, a native English professor, Mr. Moriarty, was invited to offer his precious opinions for the ones that did not appear in the dictionaries.

RESULTS

Rank Order of Strategy Use in Producing Acceptable Collocations

The results of the study showed that good writers and poor writers did not differ very

much in the types of strategy use in the production of collocations. But they differed greatly in the frequency of strategy use. Table 1 presents the rank order of strategy use in producing acceptable collocations: Except for retrieval and approximate translation, which were ranked respectively as the most and the least frequently used for both good and poor writers, the other types of strategy use were ranked differently for good and poor writers. For good writers, the types of strategy use between the first and the last were de-lexicalised verbs, synonyms, literal translation, appeal to authority, and appeal for assistance; for poor writers, they were literal translation, use of de-lexicalised verbs, appeal for assistance, synonyms, and appeal to authority.

Table 1 A Comparison of Good and Poor Writers' Strategy Use and Production of Collocations

Type of Strategy Use	Good Writers						Poor Writers					
	Acceptable Collocations			Unacceptable Collocations			Acceptable Collocations			Unacceptable Collocations		
	Rank	Fre	%	Rank	Fre	%	Rank	Fre	%	Rank	Fre	%
1. Retrieval	1	316	44	6	6	0.8	1	233	35	1	36	5
2. Literal translation	4	71	10	1	21	3	2	76	11	2	32	5
3. Approximate translation	7	13	2	2	12	2	7	12	2	3	22	3
4. Use of De-lexicalised Verbs	2	77	11	3	11	1.5	3	64	9	4	19	3
5. Use of synonyms	3	73	10	7	2	0.3	5	49	7	7	2	0.3
6. Appeal to authority	5	67	9	4	10	1.4	6	48	7	6	15	2.2
7. Appeal for assistance	6	32	4	5	7	1	4	55	8	5	17	2.5
Subtotal		649	90		69	10		537	79		143	21
Total (Frequency / Percentage)	718 / 100%						680 / 100%					

Rank Order of Strategy Use in Producing Unacceptable Collocations

Table 1 also shows us the rank order of strategy use in producing unacceptable collocations. Take good writers for example, ineffective use of literal translation was the biggest cause of those unacceptable collocations; the other types of strategy use leading to unacceptable collocations included approximate translation, use of de-lexicalised verbs, appeal to authority, appeal for assistance, retrieval, and use of synonyms. Poor writers, on the other hand, had the greatest difficulty making effective use of the retrieval strategy. The other ineffective strategies were literal translation, approximate translation, use of de-lexicalised verbs, appeal for assistance, appeal to authority, and use of synonyms.

Frequency of Strategy Use in Producing Acceptable Collocations

By associating the percentage of acceptable collocations and the different types of strategy use responsible for their production, we observe that good writers were more effective users of strategies than poor writers (see Table 1). Take the first type of strategy use for example, good writers could retrieve a higher percentage of acceptable collocations (44%) than poor writers (35%). Regarding the use of de-lexicalised verbs and synonyms, good writers, probably with a better linguistic knowledge of them, also employed them more successfully than poor writers (de-lexicalised verbs: 11% for good writers and 9% for poor writers; synonyms: 10% for good writers and 7% for poor writers). In the use of dictionary consultation, which was categorized as appeal to authority, good writers (9%) again performed better than poor writers (7%).

Frequency of Strategy Use in Producing Unacceptable Collocations

In contrast to good writers, poor writers were obviously less effective users of strategies. Although they outdid good writers in the use of literal translation (good writers: 10%; poor writers: 11%) and appeal for assistance (good writers: 4%; poor writers: 8%) when producing acceptable collocations, they generated a greater percentage of unacceptable collocations using the strategies of retrieval (good writers: 0.8%; poor writers: 5%), literal translation (good writers:

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3%; poor writers: 5%), approximate translation (good writers: 2%; poor writers: 3%), de-lexicalised verbs (good writers: 1.5%; poor writers: 3%), appeal to authority (good writers: 1.4%; poor writers: 2.2%), and appeal for assistance (good writers: 1%; poor writers: 2.5%).

Relationship Between Strategy Use and the Production of Collocations

Table 2 is a comparison of strategy use in the production of acceptable and unacceptable collocations. Although all of the seven types of strategy use were employed in their production, the rank orders were different for acceptable and unacceptable collocations. The more effective types of strategy use in the production of acceptable collocations were 1) retrieval, 2) literal translation, 3) use of de-lexicalised verbs, 4) use of synonyms, 5) appeal to authority, 6) appeal for assistance, and 7) approximate translation. The less effective types of strategy use in producing unacceptable collocations were 1) literal translation, 2) retrieval, 3) approximate translation, 4) use of de-lexicalised verbs, 5) appeal to authority, 6) appeal for assistance, and 7) use of synonyms.

Table 2 A Comparison of Strategy Use in Producing Acceptable and Unacceptable Collocations

Type of Strategy Use	Acceptable Collocations			Unacceptable Collocations		
	Rank	Frequency	%	Rank	Frequency	%
1. Retrieval	1	549	39	2	42	3
2. Literal translation	2	147	11	1	53	3.8
3. Approximate translation	7	25	2	3	34	2.4
4. Use of de-lexicalised verbs	3	141	10	4	30	2
5. Use of synonyms	4	122	9	7	4	0.3
6. Appeal to authority	5	115	8	5	25	1.8
7. Appeal for assistance	6	87	6	6	24	1.7
Subtotal		1186	85		212	15
Total (Frequency / Percentage)	1398 / 100%					

Individual Differences Among Good Writers in Strategy Use in Producing Acceptable Collocations

A close examination of the individual participant's collocation test and questionnaire revealed very interesting information regarding individual differences in strategy use when producing collocations.

Types of strategy use. Among good writers, twelve students used five types of strategy use, but two used six, and two used only four.

Retrieval. As far as retrieval strategy is concerned, No. 3 produced as many as 29 acceptable collocations using this strategy, while No. 5 and No. 12 produced only 13 acceptable collocations by retrieving them from long-term memory.

Literal/approximate translation. In creating collocations, No. 14 used literal translation and approximate translation equally often (twice for each); No. 6 used approximate translation four times and literal translation only twice; for the rest of the good writers group there were five making exclusive use of literal translation and six making very frequent use of literal translation but very rare use of approximate translation.

Use of synonyms. As for the use of synonyms, No. 1 used it nine times, but No. 14 didn't use it at all.

Use of de-lexicalised verbs. Regarding the use of de-lexicalised verbs, No. 8 used it eight times but seven students used it only three times.

Appeal to authority. In respect of appeal to authority, that is, dictionary consultation, No. 2 used it 26 times, but many didn't feel the need of using it.

Appeal for assistance. Finally, concerning the strategy use of appeal for assistance, there were six students not making use of it, but No. 9 used it seven times in producing acceptable lexical collocations.

In conclusion, it is clear that the frequency of strategy use and the preferred types of strategy use were quite different from person to person.

Individual Differences Among Poor Writers in Strategy Use in Producing Acceptable Collocations

The poor writers group was quite like the good writers group in that there were obvious individual differences in the frequency and preferred types of strategy use in the production of acceptable collocations.

Types of strategies used. Take the frequency first, seven students used six types of strategy, five students used five types, and the other five students used only four.

Retrieval. Concerning the retrieval strategy, No. 25 used it 23 times successfully, but No. 32 used it only 3 times producing acceptable collocations.

Literal/approximate translation. In the choice of literal translation and approximate translation, No. 29 used both of them once; No. 22 made exclusive use of approximate translation once; the majority of the students used literal translation more often than approximate translation.

Use of synonyms. In the use of synonyms, No. 21 made effective use of it eight times, but five students used it only once.

Use of de-lexicalised verbs. Regarding the use of de-lexicalised verbs, No. 24 used it seven times but two students used it only once.

Appeal to authority. With respect to appeal to authority, No. 25 used it 13 times; No. 21 used it 11 times; as many as eight students didn't even use it once.

Appeal for assistance. The last strategy, appeal for assistance, was not used very often either. Six students didn't make use of it at all. However, No. 21 used it 13 times.

Individual Differences Among Good Writers in Strategy Use in Producing Unacceptable Collocations

The individual differences among good writers in strategy use in producing unacceptable collocations were not very obvious.

Retrieval. For example, in the strategy use of retrieval, only a few could not retrieve acceptable collocations from their memory.

Literal/approximate translation. As for the type of translation that caused the unacceptable collocations, five students made exclusive use of approximate translation; four, literal translation; among the five students who used both, four employed literal translation more often than approximate translation.

Use of synonyms. Regarding the use of synonyms, only No. 1 and No. 14 produced unacceptable collocations using this strategy. The others were all very successful.

Use of de-lexicalised verbs. In the use of de-lexicalised verbs, only No. 10 made less effective use of it producing two unacceptable collocations. Among the rest, some produced one unacceptable collocation because of using this strategy, and the others did not make ineffective use of it.

Appeal to authority. The ineffective use of dictionary only caused one student (No. 2) to produce four unacceptable collocations. For the rest of the students, twelve students did not use it at all, and four students each produced one to two unacceptable collocations because of this strategy use.

Appeal for assistance. The last strategy use, appeal for assistance, was unused by eleven students. The six students that used it each produced one to two unacceptable collocations.

Individual Differences Among Poor Writers in Strategy Use in Producing Unacceptable Collocations

The individual differences among poor writers were not completely the same as those

among good writers.

Retrieval. Take retrieval strategy for example, twelve students failed to retrieve acceptable collocations from their memory. Among them No. 31 produced as many as seven unacceptable collocations because of the ineffective use of this strategy, while four others produced only one unacceptable collocation. Only five students did not make ineffective use of retrieval.

Literal/approximate translation. Regarding the type of translation that trapped the students into producing unacceptable collocations, three used literal translation unsuccessfully; one used approximate translation ineffectively; ten used both with one of them using approximate translation more often than literal translation, four of them using both types of translation equal number of times, and five of them using literal translation more frequently than approximate translation.

The other four types of strategy use. For the other four types of strategy use, the patterns of individual differences were similar to those found in the good writers group. They differed only in the number of people who did not make use of the strategies. In the **use of synonym**, there were sixteen; in the **use of de-lexicalised verbs**, there were six; in the strategy use of **appeal to authority**, there were eleven; in the strategy use of **appeal for assistance**, there were nine.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicated that retrieval was the most effective types of strategy use leading to the production of acceptable collocations. Though we found students in general put heavy reliance on this strategy in producing acceptable collocations, good students could make more effective use of it than poor students. Poor writers, being not consciously aware of those collocations, often failed to find them in their mental lexicon and thus had difficulty retrieving them from their memory.

Literal translation and approximate translation were two options students could make choice of when deciding to create collocations by using their intuition instead of the retrieval strategy. It is interesting to note that literal translation was the second most often used strategy in the production of acceptable collocations. Although good writers did not use it very frequently in the production of acceptable collocations, it was the second major strategy poor writers used when producing acceptable collocations. Appearing as a fairly effective strategy, it was also the number one strategy that resulted in unacceptable collocations. Both good writers and poor writers sometimes made very ineffective use of it.

The use of de-lexicalised verbs was the third effective type of strategy use for the production of acceptable collocations. The good writers, probably with a better linguistic knowledge of de-lexicalised verbs, used this strategy more successfully than poor writers. As an ineffective strategy, it ranked fourth among those that caused the students to produce unacceptable collocations. However, in this role, it ranked differently for good writers and poor writers: For good writers, it ranked third; for poor writers, it ranked fourth.

The fourth type of strategy use conducive to the production of acceptable collocations was the use of synonyms. Again, with more linguistic knowledge of collocational synonyms, the good writers could make a more effective use of this strategy than the poor writers. It ranked third for the good writers and fifth for poor writers. As for its negative role as an ineffective strategy, it ranked seventh for both good writers and poor writers. The fifth type of strategy use leading to the production of acceptable collocations was appeal to authority. Probably with better dictionary skill, good writers made more successful use of it; it ranked fifth for them but sixth for poor writers. As the fifth ineffective strategy, it ranked sixth for poor writers but fourth for good writers

The last second effective strategy use was appeal for assistance. Used more successfully by poor writers than by good writers, it ranked fourth for poor writers and sixth for good writers. As an ineffective strategy use, it ranked fifth for both good and poor writers. Compared with literal translation, approximate translation, being the seventh strategy use in the production of

acceptable collocations, played the least significant role in its effective use. Nevertheless, approximate translation was the third strategy use for poor writers and the second strategy use for good writers that caused students to produce unacceptable collocations.

Although a general pattern of strategy use could be observed for the production of acceptable and unacceptable collocations, there were still individual differences among good and poor writers. I think individual choices of their preferred effective strategy use should be respected, but their habitual use of the ineffective strategies should be corrected.

TEACHING AND LEARNING IMPLICATIONS

1. Use the Noticing Method to Promote Retention.

The findings of this study supported the idiom principle of language learning (Singleton, 1999: 24), which emphasized the salient role of semi-constructed phrases including collocations. Indeed, a good storage of them will be conducive to a language learner's fluency and accuracy in speaking and writing.

To help students establish a bank of collocations in their mental lexicon, Lewis (1997) made a strong proposal of the noticing method (pp. 52, 70). He considered the idea of "noticing" similar to Dave and Jane Willis' view of Consciousness-Raising (Willis & Willis, 1996). He argued that doing specially designed exercises could help students develop and enhance their sensitivity to the patterns of collocations. Actually, this repeated process of noticing, looking up[2], recording, and reviewing is very much like what researchers (e.g., Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Rott, 1999) said about the function of exposure frequencies in vocabulary learning and should be beneficial to the retention of collocations, which is the basis for either oral or written production.

2. Design Exercises That Can Help Raise Students' Awareness of Collocations.

Lewis (1997) recommended many collocational exercises that may help raise students' awareness of collocations. The following are some examples:

(1) Do the exercise on the topic of a healthy life-style. Match a word or phrase from List 1 with a word or phrase from List 2. (p. 88)

Figure 1

List 1	List 2
1. to balance	A. fit
2. to keep	B. your weight
3. to lose	C. carefully
4. to watch	D. your diet
5. to eat	E. weight

List 1	List 2
6. fresh	A. diet
7. daily	B. lifestyle
8. balanced	C. routine
9. healthy	D. exercise
10. regular	E. fruit

(2) Odd Man Out: Which of the following words do not form a strong word partnership with the word given (p. 91)?

PAY	a debt	a meal	a bill	a ticket	the taxi
STRONG	language	cheese	intelligence	accent	indication

[2] Dictionary use may actually have a direct side effect of enhancing retention (Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997: 295).

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(3) Find the noun, find the collocate (p. 109). Students are asked to look through a text quickly. As they read, they underline every noun they notice. They then look through the text again actively searching for each noun which has a collocating verb in front of it, though perhaps not immediately next to the noun. They underline those partner verbs in a different color. After that, they record them in their lexical notebooks, and they are reminded to revisit them a few days later.

3. Teach About the Collocational Behavior of Synonyms.

To avoid students' producing unidiomatic collocations like **attend another trip*, **absolutely dressed*, and **own much room*, teachers should remember to compare and contrast synonyms in collocations. For example, in introducing synonyms *attend* and *join*, teachers ought to give students examples like *join a club, join the army, attend a service, attend a meeting*, and *attend a class* (Alexander, 1998; Hill & Lewis, 1997). In addition, teachers should be careful using texts in which new words are glossed with what turn out on close inspection to be superordinates (Martin, 1984: 133).

4. Translate from "Collocation-to-Collocation".

The participants in this study used literal translation to a great extent. However, the results of the study revealed that this strategy use could be both effective and very ineffective. Therefore, literal translation should be employed with great caution and a new habit of translation should be formed: Instead of doing word-for-word translation all the time, we should try translating "chunk-for-chunk" (Lewis, 1997: 62) or from "collocation to collocation" (Newmark, 1988: 69) seeking parallel equivalents in L1 and L2.

5. Use Dictionaries That Contain Lexical Collocations.

Harvy and Yuill (1997) considered the use of a special dictionary of collocations might help develop students' awareness of collocations. Scholfield (1997: 281) recommended some modern corpus-based dictionaries like the *Collins COBUILD English Dictionary* (1995) and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995) in which some common lexical collocations have been included. As for bilingual dictionaries, the examples provided are not authentic or real as those appearing in the corpus-based monolingual dictionaries.

6. Learn De-lexicalised Verbs by Knowing about Their Meaning Patterns in Collocations.

As defined by Lewis (1997: 25, 216), de-lexicalised verbs are components in a large number of multi-word expressions (including collocations). Having a wide range of meaning-patterns—For example, *take an hour*- a period of time; *take the car* – traveling; *take the responsibility*-decisions or choices (Lewis, 1993: 144), they can be used in a generative way that is more like traditional grammar than vocabulary. In teaching collocations that contain de-lexicalised verbs, matrix like the following one (McCarthy, 1990: 13) can be used:

Figure 2

	a laugh	a smoke	an experience	a trip
take				
make				
have				
do				

In addition, questions for conversation topics can be designed to have a focus on collocates of a de-lexicalised verb (Coady & Huckin, 1997: 264):

(1) Are you the sort of person who: a. takes responsibility b. take advice c. takes risks?

(2) When you go on holiday, do you take a lot of photos? Of what people or places? What sort of souvenirs do you like to take home?

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APPENDIX A

Collocation Test

Fill in the blank with one possible answer and give the meaning of the collocation in Chinese.

V + N

1. My watch _____ time very well.
2. The wounded cyclist _____ efforts to stand up.
3. He _____ several attempts to reach her.
4. It _____ no difference.
5. Are you _____ another trip?
6. It doesn't _____ much room.
7. She _____ a lot of shopping yesterday.
8. He _____ an important question in the math class.
9. They found themselves saying yes to invitations that they really didn't want to _____.
10. They _____ the contract in 1999.
11. We are going to _____ a public performance next week.

Adjective + N

12. Last night I had a _____ dream in which I was lost in a dark forest.
13. He was fined for _____ driving.
14. They had a _____ talk last night.
15. That failure was a _____ lesson to him.
16. You may have _____ freedom to do whatever you like.

N + V

17. According to regulations, school _____ today.
18. Did the solution _____?
19. The opportunity has not _____.
20. He told us how the accident _____.

Adverb + Adjective.

21. She was _____ dressed. (Adv + Adj)
22. It's a _____ populated area.
23. I was _____ relieved at the news.
24. Paul Gauguin was _____ influenced by South Pacific culture.

V + Adverb

25. I know _____ what they mean.
26. They guessed _____.
27. She paid _____ for her foolishness.
28. A popular belief about camels is that they store water in their humps so they can live _____ in the desert.
29. You should practice _____.
30. If you want to study abroad, I will support you _____.

Adverb + V

31. Their actions _____ reflect their thoughts.
32. This device will _____ regulate the temperature of the room.

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